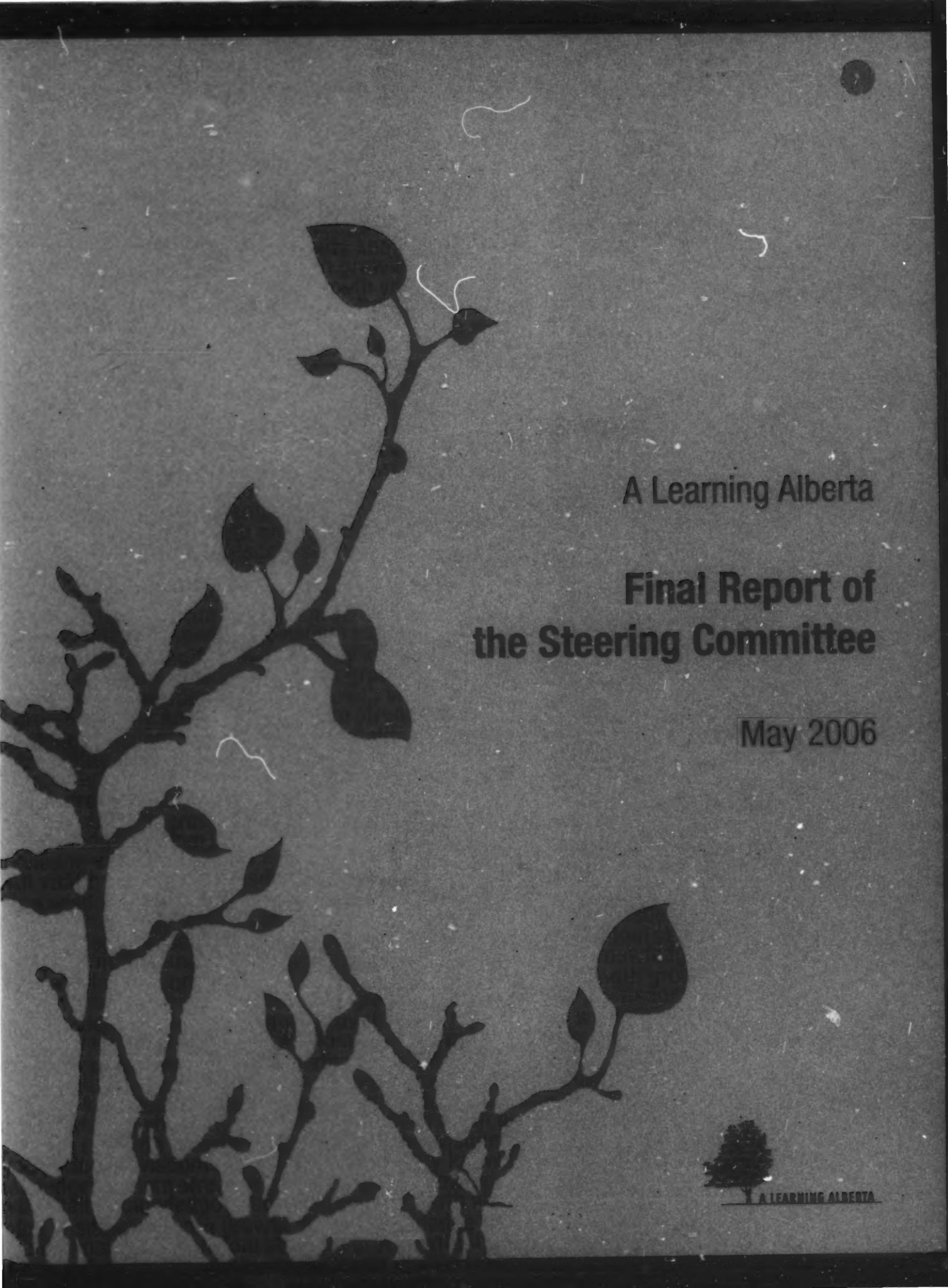

A Learning Alberta

Final Report of the Steering Committee

May 2006

A LEARNING ALBERTA

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ALBERTA ADVANCED EDUCATION CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION DATA

Alberta. Alberta Advanced Education.
Final report of the Steering Committee.

ISBN 0-7785-4772-X

1. Higher education and state - Alberta. 2. Postsecondary education - Alberta.
3. Education, Higher - Alberta. 4. Educational change - Alberta. I. Title.

LC178.2.A3 A333 2006 378.052

This report was prepared by the A Learning Alberta Steering Committee from input provided by stakeholders. The views and positions do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Alberta.

2007-00087

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Policy Context

Today's Opportunities, Tomorrow's Promise is Alberta's strategic plan and was released in March 2004. This plan lays out a course for the province over the next 20 years and identifies a vision for Alberta as well as four opportunities (pillars) to help the province maximize its potential. These pillars are:

- Unleashing Innovation
- Leading in Learning
- Competing in a Global Marketplace
- Making Alberta the Best Place to Live, Work and Visit

Alberta's advanced education system needs to support all four pillars in order secure Alberta's future. However, it must play a fundamental role in supporting Leading in Learning and Unleashing Innovation. As substantial players within Alberta's research and development sector, the province's post-secondary institutions are ready to meet the strategic plan's call to enhance Alberta's technology development and commercialization capacity. Postsecondary institutions are ready to make a difference in assessing and contributing to solving societal issues. Similarly, Alberta's wide range of advanced education providers play a pivotal role in providing the learning opportunities that advance careers, address skills shortages, and enable Albertans to lead enriching and fulfilling lives.

A Learning Alberta
Final Report of the Steering Committee

Executive Summary

Alberta. Opportunity. The two feel inseparable. Opportunity has historically been founded on the innovation of Albertans and funded by Alberta's enormous natural resources. With changing global landscapes, our future will increasingly be determined by the innovation and education of the people who call our province home.

Alberta finds itself at a crossroads. Our ability to continue to seize the opportunities that abound here is dependent on a population that can participate fully in the economy. So is our ability to continue building a strong supportive society that's attractive to those who are already here and that can attract those who will help build Alberta's future. We have the resources. We have a motivated workforce. What we need is an enhanced learning system that supports all of our aspirations. We need a learning system that covers the full range of advanced learning opportunities including literacy development, community programs, apprenticeship and industry training, colleges, universities and technical institutes.

As the Steering Committee for *A Learning Alberta*, we spoke to thousands of Albertans about the challenges of creating a knowledge-based province. We learned that while Alberta has the highest workforce participation rate in Canada, it also has among the lowest participation rate in post-secondary studies. Participation is even lower for those living in northern and remote communities, young males, First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, persons with disabilities, Albertans with low income and education levels, and immigrants. Over a third of Albertans have low literacy skills that hamper their ability to get along in a print-based world and even more have difficulty working with numbers and problem solving. Learning institutions are challenged in their desire to better meet the needs of learners from all walks of life and all parts of the province, to do the research that will drive the future, and to find ways to make a meaningful difference within a system based on competition.

We also came to understand that Albertans see advanced education funding as an investment in both future economic prosperity and social wellness. They believe that government's economic and social policies must support each other. They told us that the narrow historical focus of advanced education as a path to income and employment opportunities should broaden to recognize

the social benefits of having a learning society. They also told us that it is critical for Alberta to do world-class research, and lead the world in innovation.

Much is at stake. The failure to build a robust and integrated learning system will result in a long-term gap between where we are and the kind of society and economy Albertans want to achieve.

A Learning Alberta's Steering Committee strongly recommends that if Alberta wants to be a leader in advanced education, we must set our sights on achieving six key goals.

- Over 90% of Albertans will score in the upper tiers of international adult literacy measures and have the literacy and numeracy skills to be active citizens, achieve employment goals and engage in further learning. Today, 60% of adult Albertans are at this level in reading and just over half of adults are at this level in performing mathematical functions.
- Alberta will have the highest participation rate in post-secondary studies. Today Alberta has the third lowest participation rate among other provinces and ranks below the national average.
- Alberta will have the highest participation rate in lifelong learning. Today we rank fourth in the country.
- Alberta must be one of the top two jurisdictions for research activity in the natural and physical sciences as well as social sciences/humanities. Currently Alberta institutions rank in the middle among their peers in research monetary awards.
- Alberta must have the best support programs for graduate students. Today we lag behind other jurisdictions.
- Alberta's public post-secondary institutions will rank within the best in their class nationally. This will require investing in talent by attracting and retaining outstanding faculty, staff and students to enable world-class research, knowledge creation and innovation.

Achieving these and other goals is critical and will challenge us all. Alberta must begin bold transformational changes in order to preserve and expand the opportunities for Alberta's future youth and citizens.

Our report provides a 20-year strategic plan for achieving these goals. Its recommendations expand the direction contained in the Alberta Government's 20-year strategic plan, *Today's Opportunities, Tomorrow's Promise*. The recommendations recognize that in order to maximize opportunities for Albertans to reach their full potential, the advanced education system must operate within a collaborative framework that expands opportunities, focuses on communities, and reaches out to underrepresented - disadvantaged groups. Through transformational changes, Albertan's youth will become better prepared and adapted to be active citizens and productive workers.

Short-term highlights of what this report calls for include:

- A comprehensive sustained public information campaign that increases awareness of the opportunities available to Albertans, the importance of literacy and other foundation skills, and how people can take steps to attain individual learning. This will include promoting programs such as mentoring, learner pathways, and job readiness programs; and using community ambassadors to ensure information is correct, timely and available; plus creating learning networks across the province.
- Working in new partnerships with Aboriginal communities to ensure increased participation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in advanced education. This will include enhancing the role of Aboriginal colleges in providing the 60,000 new spaces being created in the post-secondary system by 2020.
- Enhancing supports for people with disabilities including accessibility, transition planning, accommodations, and assistive technology.
- Developing a new affordability framework that not only encourages all Albertans to pursue learning opportunities, but supports them while they are studying as well as after they have completed their studies. Affordability initiatives must include a policy to ensure fair tuition fees, incentives to encourage access for all Albertans, and rewards for learners for success and excellence.
- Developing and implementing a strategy to increase the literacy and numeracy ability of Albertans: This will include supporting quality programs within communities across the province as well as working with employers to increase workplace literacy.
- Creating steeples of excellence that allow Alberta to be a world renowned centre for research and innovation. In particular, our universities must be known for their outstanding leadership in research, while our colleges, technical institutes and the private sectors all play distinctive and significant roles in creating these steeples of excellence in diverse areas of investigation and discovery.

In order to achieve this learning Alberta, the key message the Steering Committee wishes to send is this:

We are all Albertans, and as such, we must all share equally in the opportunities this province offers us. An affordable, quality advanced education system that is the best in Canada requires an investment by all Albertans, both financially and socially.

The Steering Committee appreciates the opportunity to participate in this outstanding opportunity to shape the future direction of advanced education for all Albertans towards 2025.

On behalf of the over 3000 Albertans who participated in this process and to all those who aspire to being part of *A Learning Alberta*, we respectfully submit this final report and those of the Foundational Learning and Diversity, Aboriginal Learning and Transforming the Advanced Learning System sub-committees. We believe that by working together, we can achieve a learning society where all Albertans are inspired and supported to reach their individual potential.

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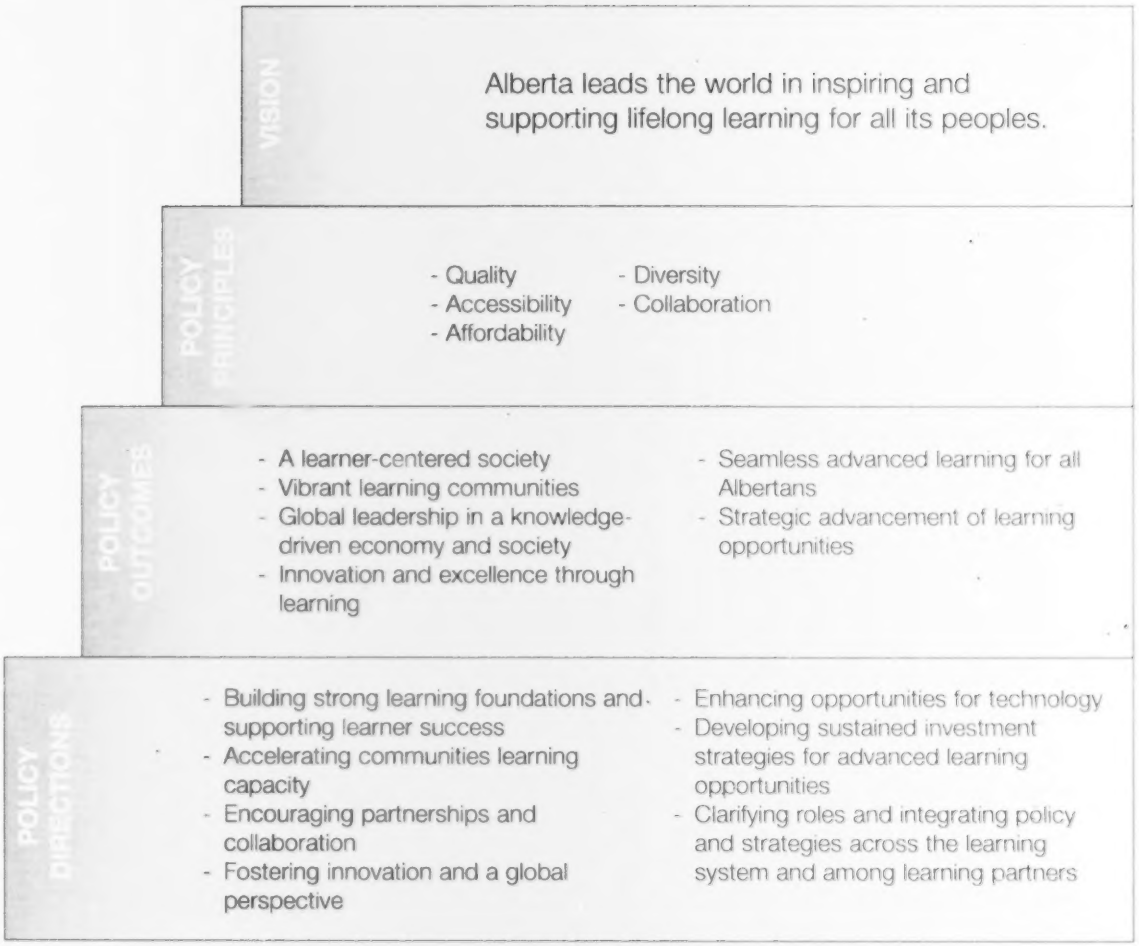
Dr. Harvey Weingarten, President, University of Calgary


VISION
Alberta leads the world in inspiring and supporting lifelong learning for all its peoples.
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- Accessibility
- Affordability
- Diversity
- Collaboration
POLICY OUTCOMES
- A learner-centered society
- Vibrant learning communities
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- Innovation and excellence through learning
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- Accelerating communities learning capacity
- Encouraging partnerships and collaboration
- Fostering innovation and a global perspective
- Enhancing opportunities for technology
- Developing sustained investment strategies for advanced learning opportunities
- Clarifying roles and integrating policy and strategies across the learning system and among learning partners

Figure 1 – A Strategic Framework for Advanced Learning for All Albertans

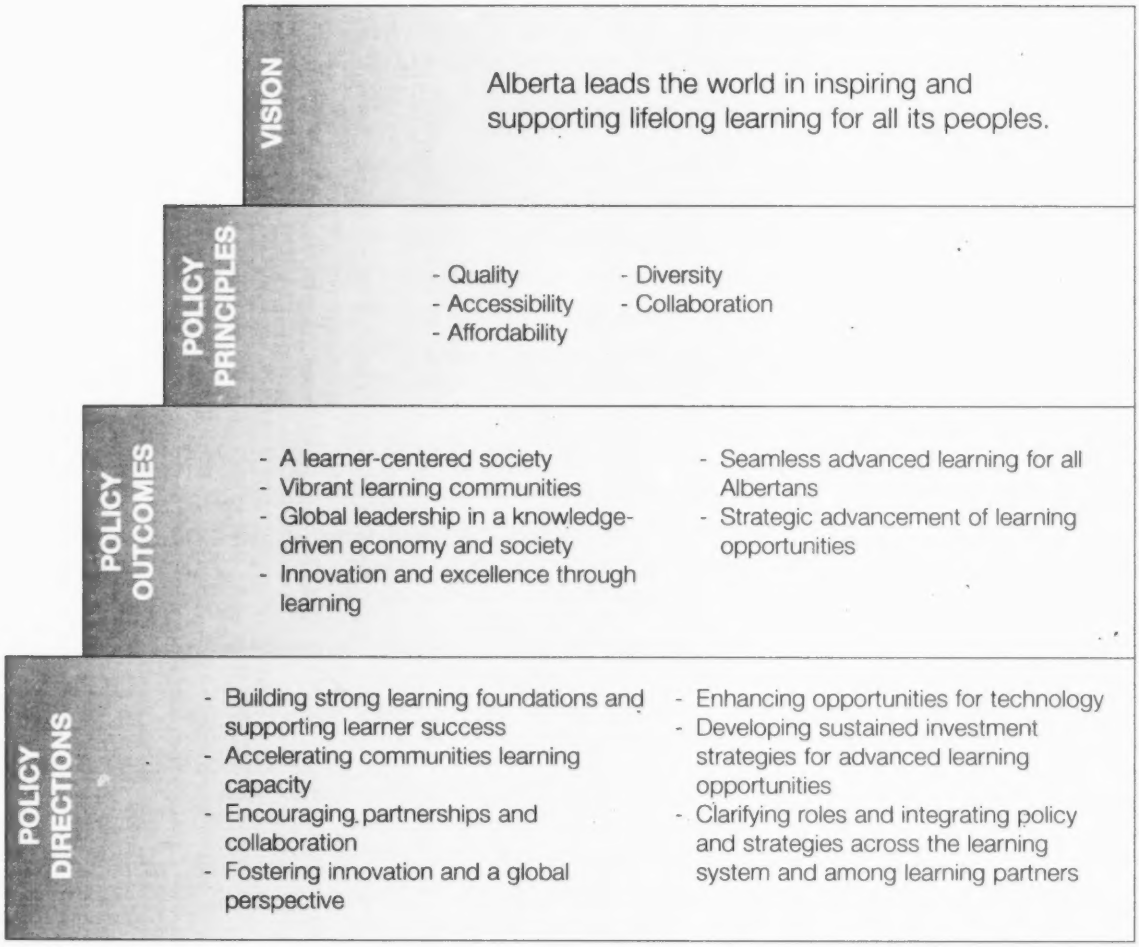
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Figure 1 – A Strategic Framework for Advanced Learning for All Albertans

A Learning Alberta

Final Report of the Steering Committee

A Learning Alberta - Beginnings

A Learning Alberta was a multi-stage dialogue, that brought together thousands of Albertans to talk about and seek answers to the challenges of creating a knowledge based province. Learners, community leaders, learning institutions, Aboriginal Peoples, literacy advocates, those working with immigrant learners, the disabled community, and many others participated.

Its beginnings were in January 2005, when Premier Klein announced that the Alberta government would make access to affordable and high quality advanced education its top priority. Alberta's Advanced Education Minister seized the opportunity and drew together stakeholders in a strategic dialogue to shape the future direction of the province's advanced education system.

The dialogue began with roundtable discussions. The Minister then asked representatives from a wide range of learning perspectives to serve on a Steering Committee tasked with identifying a new vision and policy direction for Alberta's advanced education system.

Taking the roundtable discussions as a starting point, the Steering Committee held a series of consultations where stakeholders:

- provided written submissions to key issues raised in a series of discussion documents;
- participated in regional meetings held throughout the province; and
- provided feedback through an online survey.

From this, the Steering Committee developed a draft policy framework reflected on by over 250 Albertans at a Minister's Forum held in Edmonton on November 1 and 2, 2005. Actions and initiatives needed to achieve the goals set out in the framework were discussed.

Stakeholder comments can be summarized as follows:

- Alberta needs a strategic vision for advanced education.
- The vision must acknowledge the tremendous benefits of learning, not just to the economy, but to the lives of all Albertans.
- Spending on advanced education must be seen as an investment, not only as an expenditure.
- Alberta has a unique opportunity to develop an integrated advanced learning system. Our future success depends on collaborative rather than competitive action.

- The vision must support resources in communities and regions as well as in urban centres, and must harness the power of new technologies to achieve the best learning opportunities possible.
- Alberta's advanced learning system must also recognize and value the diversity in character, cultures, needs and aspirations of all Albertans.

A Learning Alberta – Building on the Forum

The Steering Committee gathered the input and feedback from participants at the Forum and incorporated it into the strategic framework for advanced learning for all Albertans (Figure One) that began with the following vision:

Alberta leads the world in inspiring and supporting lifelong learning for all its peoples.

The committee was further asked to provide the Minister with recommendations around a long-term strategic plan for advanced learning.

To assist in developing the plan, three sub-committees were struck to provide further input into *A Learning Alberta* and create action plans in the following key areas:

- Foundational Learning and Diversity;
- Aboriginal Learning; and
- Transforming the Advanced Learning System.

Foundational Learning and Diversity

The Foundational Learning and Diversity sub-committee was asked to find ways to make more educational opportunities available to communities so that they can better meet the learning needs of adults under-represented in existing formal learning opportunities. The sub-committee looked specifically at adults who live with a disability, low literacy skills, low fluency in English and/or the challenges of settling in a new country, and those adults whose lifelong learning needs are not met by the formal post-secondary system. The sub-committee was also asked to determine ways to increase community, business, and institutional partnerships that provide more responsive local learning opportunities.

Foundational learning refers to the learning opportunities and supports required to attain and maintain the base skills or competencies that enable individuals to participate socially, pursue further learning, and have satisfying employment.

Aboriginal Learning

The Aboriginal Learning sub-committee was asked to develop a set of short, medium and long term recommendations to support Aboriginal learning within the new vision and policy direction, including:

- identifying gaps and barriers for change;
- reviewing innovative approaches in other jurisdictions;
- finding ways to strengthen and enhance the diversity of the advanced education system and build the right foundations to ensure Aboriginal people are able to fully participate in further learning opportunities; and
- focusing on removing barriers to accessibility, including jurisdiction challenges.

Transforming the Advanced Learning System

The third sub-committee was asked to develop a series of policy proposals with a focus on affordability, increasing capacity, expanding research and innovation, creating a seamless advanced learning system, and refining roles and responsibilities throughout the system.

This, the final report of the Steering Committee, is a synthesis and compilation of the sub-committees' recommendations and the Steering Committee's thoughts. Separate documents are available online at [illegible] that summarize the recommendations and findings of the three sub-committees.

Designing a New Future for Advancing Education: Recommendations

The Strategic Framework developed through discussions and input from stakeholders and Albertans (Figure one) includes six desired policy outcomes. These policy outcomes describe where and how we can achieve the overarching vision for Alberta to inspire and support lifelong learning for all and to build a learning society in the province. The six policy outcomes are:

- A learner-centered society
- Vibrant learning communities
- Global leadership in a knowledge-driven economy and society
- Innovation and excellence through learning
- Seamless advanced learning for all Albertans
- Strategic advancement of learning opportunities

The three sub-committees provided the Steering Committee with enormously creative ideas and new directions on how we can achieve these policy outcomes. Some recommendations outline specific strategies, initiatives, or programs. Others speak more generally about how to get to where we want to be. The Steering Committee believes the efforts and creativity of the subcommittees should be made available to continue an ongoing dialogue on how to build a learning society in Alberta. The final reports of the sub-committees are available in their entirety at

The Steering Committee for *A Learning Alberta* carefully considered the full range of ideas and initiatives put forward by the sub-committees. The myriad of suggestions and proposals have been joined together into policy recommendations that will further the vision and outcomes for advanced learning in Alberta.

1. Outcome: A Learner-Centered Society

In a learner centered society, the learning choices and aspirations of individual learners are understood, respected, and addressed. They are at the very core of the learning system and are inspired and supported by learning organizations and communities.

Alberta will be a learner-centered society when there is an overall increase in educational attainment by all learners. This means full participation and successful learning among under-represented Albertans including First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, rural residents, persons with disabilities, immigrants, young males, and socio-economically disadvantaged Albertans. Learners will have a high level of awareness of the importance of advancing their education and will understand the tools and supports that are readily available to help them achieve their own success. In a learner-centered society, the system will allow for ease of movement by learners throughout the system with mechanisms that recognize prior learning and experiences, transfer among institutions, and appropriate stages of learning opportunities.

We will be successful when:

- Albertans are among the most educated in Canada.
- Alberta's labor force has the needed skills and talents.
- Alberta is producing the new professors, instructors, and teachers needed to support learners to reach their potential and to create new knowledge and innovation.
- Communities and government have a focus and investment in all stages of learning from basic literacy and learning skills right through to graduate level studies.
- Albertans are engaged to reach their optimum level of success.

Policy Recommendations

1.1 Build public awareness of the importance of learning.

- Develop and launch a comprehensive provincial public awareness campaign that increases awareness of the broad range of advanced education opportunities available to Albertans and the importance of learning.
- Promote literacy and include the importance of families reading and learning together, literacy and other foundations skills, and the value of continuous learning.
- Provide information on planning for post-secondary studies and apprenticeship training, options, and choices available and processes to access apprenticeship training programs in designated trades and occupations. Learner pathways projects, job readiness programs, community ambassadors, mentoring, eLearning, and public and private learning opportunities must be made available.
- A program to inform Aboriginal groups about the value of participating in learning and the range of options must be delivered in partnership with First Nations, Métis and Inuit stakeholder groups.
- Continue to support strategic communication plans that will dispel myths about the trades, encourage employers to train apprentices, and build participation in Alberta's apprenticeship and industry training system.
- All components of a public awareness campaign must be delivered collaboratively and through a variety of community agencies.

1.2 Inspire learning in populations that are currently under-represented in learning.

- Develop and launch specific initiatives that are culturally relevant to under-represented populations.
- Facilitate access to learning with local outreach, information, educational counseling and mentorships available locally through Community Adult Learning Councils, other community organizations, and post-secondary institutions.
- In partnership with Alberta Education, Alberta Human Resources and Employment and Aboriginal leaders, take steps to ensure that First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth are well prepared for advanced learning and the workforce. Counseling and comprehensive information should be available to First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners to ensure they are well-informed about the range of career and work opportunities. This should start with learners in the earlier grades. Because of their wealth of experience, elders should play a significant role in this process.
- Continue to develop promotional materials to increase awareness among Aboriginal youth of careers in the trades.

1.3 Enhance the ability of instructors and learners to respond to a diverse learning population.

- Provide instructors with strategies and tools to help them develop inclusive environments.
- Provide sensitivity training to other learners, faculty, sectional instructors, and administrative personnel in post-secondary institutions so that they can more effectively include and work with learners with disabilities or other cultural considerations.
- Encourage Aboriginal people to become teachers.

1.4 Ensure learners with special needs have appropriate supports.

- All areas of the advanced education system must provide learners with access to all necessary supports to facilitate success and contribute to meaningful learning experiences. This must include every area of the system from application processes, to learning supports, to student assistance programs.
- Incorporate a focus on the learner into the design and development of programs. From the outset, develop all courses with universal design principles and ensure the courses are accessible for all learners with disabilities. Build on mentorship programs to increase individual development.

1.5 Recognize the learner needs of First Nations, Métis and Inuit populations.

- Simplify application and entrance processes.
- Develop First Nation, Métis and Inuit specific learner support services at advanced learning institutions. Specific objectives of the services would include coordinating existing institution program and service initiatives with new First Nations, Métis and Inuit services, stimulating new initiatives, and introducing an elder presence at institutions.
- Develop programs to address the needs of Aboriginal people who lack the necessary workplace skills but would like to participate in apprenticeship programs.

2. Outcome: Vibrant Learning Communities

In a learning community, learners are able to access a broad range of programs because employers, learning providers, schools, and other community organizations make it easy to move between work and learning. Communities are able to attract and retain professionals who in turn provide strong leadership in developing and enhancing learning strategies in their communities. Aboriginal communities are more integrated into the advanced learning system for all, so that First Nations, Métis, Inuit and other under-represented learners have successful outcomes.

Learning opportunities reflect the diverse needs of communities of interest, culture and geography. The capacity of communities to achieve their learning potential is supported by collaboration among their learning partners – industry, government, learning institutions, and community and cultural partners.

We will be successful when:

- Communities are engaged in a broad array of learning opportunities.
- Financial need is not a barrier to pursuing learning opportunities.
- Employers, communities and the government are working collaboratively to ensure learning communities are healthy and economically vibrant.
- Alberta can be described as a web of interlocked learning opportunities.

Policy Recommendations

2.1 Redefine the role of Community Adult Learning Councils and other community-based program providers such as regional consortia to ensure strong community programs.

- This should include looking at funding considerations. Community Adult Learning Councils and other community learning providers play an important role in providing non-threatening, flexible learning environments where there is a sense of community. Programs need to include adult literacy, family literacy and English as a Second Language, first aid, basic employability skills, and other programs so that more learners can participate in lifelong learning.

2.2 Invest in a coordinated response to increase literacy skills by developing a literacy and foundation skills action plan for Alberta.

2.3 Establish community support teams for disabled learners.

- There is a critical shortage of professionals who can support disabled learners, including qualified psychologists, assistive technology specialists, sign language interpreters, and interveners. A working group should be established to identify the scope of professional skill shortages and provide recommendations to address this critical issue.

2.4 Enhance the capacity and influence of Aboriginal communities.

- Founded on the principles of trust, openness, respect, and quality develop a partnership framework of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people and the Government of Alberta with an aim to create more access and success within the full spectrum of advanced learning opportunities. Contribute to safe and effective facilities being available within Aboriginal communities.
- Develop initiatives, including leadership development programs, which integrate Aboriginal Peoples' governance models and promote their participation in key decision-making positions and governance roles at advanced learning institutions (e.g. Board of Governors).

- To improve Aboriginal learner success in advanced learning, develop a range of strategies to ensure that teacher preparation, the development of curriculum and learning resources are based on and integrate First Nations, Métis and Inuit culture and languages.
- Continue supporting First Nations, Métis, and Inuit apprenticeship and industry training initiatives.

2.5 Develop adaptive and flexible learner transition programs.

- The path traveled by many learners as they complete advanced learning studies is non-linear. Developing adaptive and flexible learner transition programs that recognize past learning and ensure a smooth transition to the next stage of learning (e.g. bundled learning) will help ensure their success.
- Target transition programs for immigrant youth and Francophone Albertans that meet their unique needs and increase their success.

2.6 Explore options and incentives to encourage employers to hire and train apprentices through all periods of apprenticeship to completion of their apprenticeship program.

3. Outcome: Global Leadership in a Knowledge-driven Economy and Society

Alberta is well positioned to be an active participant in both social and economic global opportunities. A globally-focused Alberta will have strong and responsive knowledge networks that help learners succeed in a global marketplace. Learners, communities, and employers will be able to participate in a wide scope of international and global sharing opportunities.

International education will be facilitated through new and expanded global partnerships and the exchange of learning opportunities for instructors and learners. Second language development will be found at all levels. Alberta will increase its support of immigration and the advanced learning and employment of immigrants. Alberta will be a place of choice for international students.

We will be successful when:

- Alberta supports immigrant families in transitioning to an accepting employment and learning environment.
- Albertans are participating in international learning experiences.

- Immigrants receive the educational supports they need to settle and integrate into Alberta's society and economy.
- All Albertan's have opportunities to participate in and benefit from the knowledge-based economy.

Policy Recommendations

3.1 Facilitate seamless transitions of adult immigrants into Alberta's society and economy.

- Develop a coordinated response to facilitate transitions to foundational learning, post-secondary education or employment for immigrant and refugee youth over the age of 19.

3.2 Develop an action plan to recognize international credentials and prior learning of immigrants.

3.3 Develop and implement an international education strategy.

- Programs that allow Albertans to travel to other countries to participate in learning and language programs, as well as opportunities for international students to study in Alberta, must continue to be expanded in order to strengthen Alberta's relationships across the world.

3.4 Develop strategies to attract and retain top international instructors and researchers to enhance our knowledge base.

4. Outcome: Innovation and Excellence through Learning

A learning system with innovation and excellence through learning as its hallmarks will nurture, support and celebrate creativity, discovery and outstanding scholarship and research across its diversity. Alberta will be the leader in the use of technology to ensure that all Albertans have access to the best learning opportunities throughout their lives. Albertans will create and share knowledge and use it in innovative ways.

Research and discovery of new knowledge will build Alberta's innovation capacity. Stronger relationships and partnerships will be developed between research centres and the private sector. There is a prevailing commitment to excellence and innovation in learning and research throughout the post-secondary system. Private, not-for-profit, and public organizations will all have the capacity to use new knowledge in innovative ways.

We will be successful when:

- More graduate students are retained in Alberta.
- Universities and research centres are better able to conduct leading-edge research.
- Top faculty and researchers are attracted to and retained in the province.
- The applied research capacity of colleges and technical institutes is actively developed.
- Opportunities for applied research with community partners are actively occurring.

Policy Recommendations

4.1 Build Alberta's research capacity.

- Advanced education stakeholders, government partners, and the private sector should collaborate to provide research funding to institutions across a broad array of areas. Institutions should be supported in their areas of research strength and excellence. Consideration of support should be given for centres of research excellence in areas of strength.
- Increase Alberta's long-term research potential by encouraging greater numbers of undergraduates to engage in innovation activities working with qualified faculty and strong instructional support and resources. Creating research opportunities for undergraduates within Alberta's universities, colleges, and technical institutes will increase skill levels, competencies, and experience. It will also encourage undergraduates in degree programs to pursue graduate studies.

4.2 Support knowledge transfer to Alberta's economy and society.

- Increased learning/work opportunities for students and graduates will enhance knowledge transfer and increase private sector engagement in research.
- Initiatives to increase the number of internships, cooperative learning experiences, or research fellowships could be supported through targeted funding to post-secondary institutions or by creating incentives for business and industry.
- Create more spaces and enhance support for Masters and PhD students across a broad range of programs to enhance capacity for

research. In addition, investments must be made in attracting and retaining talented faculty and staff to support expanded opportunities for graduate students.
- Support international education and research opportunities.

4.3 Enhance a learning and technology framework.

- Sustained investment in technology development, infrastructure, and utilization will increase Alberta's research and innovation capacity. For example, investing in collaborative initiatives could improve access to advanced learning opportunities, improve information and communication within innovation networks, and enhance student services and administrative efficiency.

4.4 Create a provincial centre of excellence in First Nations, Métis and Inuit education.

- In partnership with the federal government, establish a provincial centre of excellence designed specifically to address issues in First Nations, Métis and Inuit learning. The centre could leverage knowledge, experience, and wisdom from existing programs and initiatives and provide an invaluable focus for research, innovation, and sharing of best practices.
- The centre would become a resource for First Nations, Métis and Inuit educators, for researchers and for schools seeking advice and support in the best ways of meeting the needs of their Aboriginal learners.
- The centre must provide an opportunity to learn from elders about traditional ways of teaching Aboriginal children and youth.

5. Outcome: Seamless Advanced Learning for all Albertans

A seamless advanced learning system is one where Alberta learners move easily through a broad array of learning opportunities in a lifelong journey of learning. The entire spectrum of learning providers is collaborative and allows transitions throughout schools, community organizations, non-profit learning providers, employers, and post-secondary institutions. Government and the private sector work together to contribute to the costs of an integrated system in recognition of the benefits gained by industry, community, and government through having a well-educated population.

We will be successful when:

- Policies, programs and funding mechanisms encourage collaboration and partnership over competition.
- Joint-use facilities create an environment in which learners are comfortable moving from one learning opportunity to another.
- Financial need is not a barrier, regardless of age or circumstance.

Policy Recommendations

5.1 Clearly define the roles of learning providers across a highly integrated system.

- A stakeholder working group must be established to further consider roles and responsibilities among all system partners to ensure future design and direction and enable the right program and institutional mix to meet the complex diversity of learners' needs.

5.2 Develop and implement a new affordability framework.

- Needs-based student assistance programs must consider the full range of costs incurred by both full and part-time learners, including tuition, books technology, actual living costs, and transportation in order to support successful learning outcomes. Allowances for these costs must be reviewed annually and adjusted accordingly to reflect real costs.
- Post-secondary tuition must remain affordable.
- Tuition fees should be kept affordable. Fees should be rolled back to the level set by institutions prior to the tuition rebates and any future increases should be linked to a more moderate level of growth (i.e. Consumer Price Index). Accommodating annual inflationary cost pressures experienced by post-secondary institutions should be met through government funding rather than student tuition fees.
- In recognition that proximity to learning opportunities may cause a barrier to participation, adequate resources should be provided for all learners who must move to attend advanced education studies or apprenticeship technical training, or who wish to study at a distance.
- Debt management benchmarks must be determined and repayment programs designed to ensure education is affordable after completion of programs.

5.3 Coordinate support programs for learners with disabilities.

- Learners with disabilities receive support from more than one government ministry. These ministries need to work together to coordinate their efforts and programs so that funding and assessment processes are no more onerous for learners with disabilities than they are for other students.
- Ensure disability supports and accommodations are available to all Albertans who meet admission requirements, regardless of course load and length of time required to complete programs.

- Work with institutions, the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board, licensing bodies, and professional associations to enhance and increase flexibility, particularly with physical accommodations.
- Consider adjusting student loan pay-back schedules to recognize the social barriers faced by many students with disabilities seeking work.
- Ensure appropriate assessments for learners with disabilities are done in the senior year of high school and are focused on the kinds of accommodations required in the post-secondary setting. These updated assessments will streamline the funding process and assist in ensuring appropriate accommodations are in place at the post-secondary institution.

5.4 Expand the ability of institutions and employers to recognize prior learning through developing a framework that supports the assessment of prior learning.

- Expand bridging programs that address specific knowledge and skills gaps so that individuals transitioning from work to learning do not have to repeat entire programs of study. In addition, skilled tradespeople must be provided with more opportunities to receive credit towards other degrees and diploma programs as they continue in their lifelong learning paths.

6. Outcome: Strategic Advancement of Learning Opportunities

The vision of a true learning society for Alberta must be pursued with foresight, a persistent commitment and sustained strategies and investment. These include ongoing investments in human resources, facilities, equipment, technology, programs, and other supports. In a true learning society, community capacity continues to grow and respond to the emerging needs of its learners, and the entire system is responsive and adaptable in a timely manner.

If achieved, Alberta will have the human capacity to quickly respond to economic and labor requirements to realize Alberta's vision: "A vibrant and prosperous province where Albertans enjoy a superior quality of life and are confident about the future for themselves and their children." *Alberta's Vision for the Future. Alberta Government of Alberta Strategic Business Plan and 2006-09 Business Plan*

We will be successful when:

- The success measures in all of the previously described policy outcomes are achieved.
- Alberta is seen as a leader in Canada in advanced education.

Policy Recommendations

6.1 Align Alberta Advanced Education to support A Learning Alberta.

- Create and resource an Alberta government unit responsible for coordinating adult and family literacy initiatives in Alberta, and leading and monitoring the implementation of the literacy and foundational skills strategy.
- Create a strategic-level position within the Department of Advanced Education with the mandate to ensure First Nation, Métis and Inuit learner, system and resource specific solutions and strategies are promoted within the advanced learning system, institutions and government organizations.
- Establish a Foundational Learning and Diversity secretariat that can work at the cross-ministry level to improve the learning environment for Albertans under-represented in Learning.

6.2 Increase local access and inter-sectoral partnerships.

- Provide funding for regional accessibility plans. The plans must be developed by inter-sectoral partnerships between residents, literacy and other community-based learning providers, Community Adult Learning Councils, regional consortia, post-secondary institutions, schools, libraries, Parent-link centres, businesses, and others in a specified geographic area.

6.3 Enhance investments in advanced learning.

- Adjust all funding models so that they provide stability and encourage strategic planning. Government funding is essential to invest in and create a world-class learning system.

6.4 Establish new advanced education endowments.

- Consistent with overall government direction, establish new advanced education endowments, such as a Humanities and Social Science endowment, to support various system improvements and help achieve the new vision.
- Create a fund to support innovative community-based learning.

6.5 Expand the Alberta advanced learning system to include Aboriginal colleges.

- Aboriginal colleges should play an important role in creating the more than 60,000 more advanced learning spaces by 2020. At least 3000 of these spaces should be created by expanding Alberta's advanced

learning system to include Aboriginal colleges, and by working in partnership with other established colleges and universities to ensure Aboriginal students have access to a range of quality programs. This should occur in cooperation with the federal government and First Nations, Métis and Inuit stakeholder groups.

- Develop the necessary mechanisms to recognize Aboriginal colleges as part of the advanced education system.

6.6 Develop an accountability framework to report on the outcomes achieved through *A Learning Alberta*.

- The framework should serve as a basis to determine future investment strategies to enhance quality.

Measuring Success

Comprehensive, relevant and understandable measures must be developed to ensure the success of *A Learning Alberta*. The Steering Committee has considered a number of qualitative measures. The following themes of measures have been recommended but because of the complexities involved in establishing measures and measurement techniques, further work by the department will be required to provide the details for each measure.

- Advanced education participation rates, with the goal of having one of the highest among G8 countries. This would include sub-measures related to participation and completion rates of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, individuals with disabilities, and immigrant people.
- Number of graduate students studying in Alberta.
- Literacy levels necessary to function in a knowledge-based economy, with the goal of having more than 90% of Albertans at this level.
- Being one of the top two jurisdictions for natural/physical sciences as well as social sciences/humanities research activity. Alberta must have a world-class research system.
- Ranking in the top categories of international education participation.
- An affordable system where Albertans are not held back by the cost of education. Ultimately, an affordability measure must take into account the value of lifelong learning and consider that learners have vastly differing financial needs depending on what and how they are learning, and where and when they are studying.

Conclusions

The Steering Committee has found *A Learning Alberta* to be an engaging, enlightening and very challenging process. If there has been one consistent discovery throughout the dialogue it is that the advanced learning system is vast, complex and supported by a wide range of partners and stakeholders. Changes must be accomplished through these partners and stakeholders.

Alberta must have a world-leading advanced education system. That means having a learning-centered society where the learning choices and aspirations of individual learners are understood, respected and addressed. We need to ensure that our communities are learning communities where learners are able to access a broad range of programs because employers, learning providers, schools and other community organizations are well-supported and working together.

Alberta needs a world-wide focus and must be positioned as an active participant in both social and economic global opportunities. Our learning system must have innovation and excellence as its hallmarks in order to nurture, support and celebrate creativity, discovery and outstanding scholarship and research.

A world-leading system must be seamless, one where Alberta learners move easily through a broad array of learning opportunities in a lifelong journey of learning. And finally, the vision of a true learning society for Alberta must be pursued with foresight, a persistent commitment and sustained strategies and investment.

It will take all Albertans to make *A Learning Alberta* a living process. However, Alberta, the land of opportunity, is well positioned with the right citizens and the right incentives to work together to accomplish these recommendations by 2025.

A LEARNING ALBERTA.